



Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is the purpose of the bond referendum?

The bond election on Nov. 5 will provide an opportunity for citizens to choose whether the City should issue debt to fund three parks propositions.

2. What projects are included?

Voters will be presented with three propositions:

► **Proposition One: Community Park**

A new 65-acre major community park would include trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, a pavilion, tennis center and restrooms. Residents would have access to sports fields for activities such as cricket, soccer, lacrosse, rugby and flag football. More passive amenities would include a labyrinth, great lawn and bocce courts.

► **Proposition Two: Brazos River Park Phase II and Festival Site**

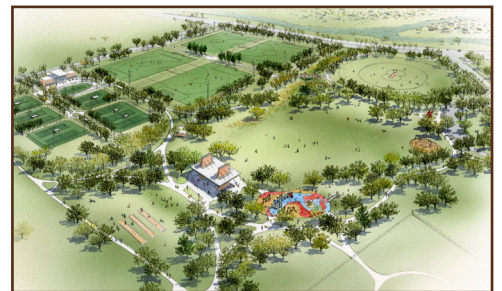
New parkland development along the Brazos River would include a multi-purpose lake for canoeing, kayaking, dragon boat races and fishing. Amenities included at the park would be a boathouse, shelters, restrooms and pavilions. There would also be a series of connecting hike and bike trails to the existing Sugar Land Memorial Park at Brazos River Park. Also included is an adjacent festival site that could accommodate large-scale events like the City's annual Fourth of July celebration and cultural events.

► **Proposition Three: Hike and Bike Trails and Pedestrian Bridges**

A new network of approximately 10 miles of hike and bike trails and bridges throughout the City that would connect neighborhoods and the community with existing trails. A new north-south trail would be built along Ditch H that would cross under State Highway 6 and under U.S. Highway 59. It would also include the construction of the Imperial Trail near U.S. Highway 90A as well segments to the existing First Colony Trail network.

3. Who identified the need for these propositions?

Community input provided over years of public meetings, surveys, stakeholder requests and other forums shaped the proposed bond election and can be seen in the diversity of the offerings in each of the propositions — new parks, public spaces and recreational facilities. A citizens' bond committee recently recommended the parks projects and the budget for a \$50 million bond election. More than 100 residents met from March through May to review projects, consider phasing opportunities and prioritize alternatives.



Aerial rendering of 65-acre major Community Park



Brazos River Park Phase II rendering: overlook of Festival Site



Bridge rendering for proposed Hike and Bike Trails and Pedestrian Bridges



4. How much will each proposition cost?

65-acre major Community Park	\$18,540,000
Brazos River Park Phase II and Festival Site	\$21,300,000
Approximately 10 miles of Hike & Bike Trails and Pedestrian Bridges	\$10,160,000
TOTAL	\$50,000,000

5. How long will these projects take?

While the City has secured the land for these three projects, there are still several easements to be resolved and design plans finalized in order to begin construction. The City plans to complete all of the projects within 7 years and will begin with the construction of the First Colony Trail segments and Imperial Trail.

6. Why is a bond election needed?

The City's current property tax rate structure can support existing parks, streets, drainage and public safety; however, the tax rate does not have the capacity for new Park projects.

7. How will these bonds be paid?

The bonds will be paid from property taxes. The City's sound fiscal management has earned it a AAA Bond rating from Standard & Poor's and Fitch. This allows the City to finance the proposed projects at competitive rates.

8. What if costs of the projects escalate?

Within the project budgets, a total of \$5 million has been reserved for bond issuance and escalation for construction inflation over the seven year period until all projects are complete.

9. Will any of the projects generate revenue?

Yes. It is anticipated that the festival site and the 65-acre major community park with adult sports activities could help offset the operations of some facilities.

10. What if all the money is not used?

If there are funds remaining due to the City being able to reduce the cost of the projects, a list of priorities for each of the projects has been recommended by the Citizens' Bond Committee for future City Council consideration.

11. When was the last bond election?

Sugar Land's last bond election was in 1999. All of the projects that were approved have been constructed. The 1999 propositions included public safety and parks facilities and streets and drainage improvements.

12. How did the last bond election impact the City's tax rate?

The City implemented the bond projects without increasing the tax rate.

13. Will the tax increase go away after the bonds are paid off?

Any increase to the tax rate for the parks projects would remain until the bonds are paid off in 20 years. Although it is difficult to bind future city councils, the City's intent is to keep the tax rate as low as possible while maintaining the quality of service and amenities that our residents expect.

14. Why is the Community Park project needed?

The 65-acre Community Park has been through an extensive “public process” with various stakeholder meetings, public meetings as well as a community wide survey. The Parks Recreation Open Space Master Plan shows the need for a community park on the western side of Sugar Land. Sugar Land has existing community parks in the north, including Eldridge Park; Oyster Creek Park and Lost Creek Park to the east; and First Colony Athletic Park to the south.

15. Who will use the Community Park?

The large community park will be accessible from U.S. Highway 59, State Highway 6 and U.S. Highway 90A. The proposed park will include new multi-use recreation fields and the City’s first tennis center. The multi-use recreation fields would accommodate soccer, lacrosse, rugby, cricket and flag football. The fields are being created due to the overwhelming need for space for adult sports leagues that promote health and fitness. All ages will be served at the tennis center. In addition to meeting community-wide sports program needs, there is still plenty for everyone to do with the inclusion of neighborhood park amenities such as a playground, large pavilion, trails, bocce courts, a great lawn and a labyrinth.

16. How was the land obtained for the Community Park?

This location was purchased by the City in 2012 under terms that were defined in a development agreement with Newland, which was negotiated in 2003 before the area was annexed into the City. The City’s leaders recognized the need for another large-scale park as the City grew to its ultimate development and negotiated the purchase of the land at a good price. The City was able to purchase the land for less than \$1 per square foot.

17. What is included in the \$10,160,000 cost for the trail network?

- The citywide network will include 10 miles of trails, bridges, trailheads and connections. The lion’s share of the proposed network contains the Ditch H Trail—the 5-mile north/south spine of the trail system. It extends from Imperial Park to existing trails near Clements High School at Sweetwater Boulevard and has two significant crossings underneath State Highway 6 and U.S. Highway 59 as well as a crossing under Lexington Boulevard. This trail includes two pedestrian bridges to cross Ditch H and to connect behind Clements High School and the existing First Colony Trails across Sweetwater.
- The Imperial Trail connects the existing U.S. Highway 90A trail, the existing Lake Pointe trail and the proposed Ditch H trail. It has both wide sidewalks and off-street trails with crosswalk signage and striping at Brooks and Azalea to allow for better pedestrian visibility.
- The First Colony Trail segments connect existing trails within First Colony. The majority of the segments follow drainage channels in the First Colony area. One of the major connectors is a bridge at Mesquite Park that connects the Settlers Park and Chimney Stone neighborhoods to the existing trails on the west side of the channel. An additional bridge connects the existing trail segments to Lexington Blvd.

18. What is included in the cost of the trails?

The average cost per mile for a 10-foot wide trail is \$739,200. The trails included in the bond election will utilize 6 inches of concrete to minimize future maintenance costs and allow emergency vehicle traffic. All of the trails are designed to increase the safety for residents pursuing healthy lifestyles.

19. How much cost do the bridges represent in the proposed trail network?

There are two major pedestrian bridges on Ditch H that total \$1,754,500. The First Colony trails include two pedestrian bridges totaling \$892,700.

20. How will the propositions impact the City's tax rate?

If the propositions are approved, the tax rate could be increased. The \$50 million bond project represents a maximum 5 cents on the tax rate. The City intends to work to absorb as much of this potential increase into the existing tax rate. The construction schedule has been designed to allow no more than a 1 cent increase per year if needed. Even with the maximum increase to the tax rate, Sugar Land would still have the third lowest tax rate among 63 cities within its population range. The City of Sugar Land's portion of a resident's total tax bill is approximately 15 percent.

21. What will the increase represent on my tax bill?

There is some misinformation being presented that says the average tax burden will increase by 44 percent at the end of five years. The 5-cent increase is a 16.2 percent increase to the current tax rate.

22. Home values appear to be increasing in Sugar Land. How does this affect my tax bill?

The citywide average home value has increased due to new homes that were built or annexed into the City that were significantly higher in value than homes that were already in the City. This does not mean that an individual's home value has experienced that same dramatic increase. In 2007, the City raised the homestead exemption from 1 percent to 5 percent and raised it again in 2008 to 7 percent. This allowed the taxable value of most homes to stay level during that time, even though the appraised value increased.

As a reference, the City researched four homes in different neighborhoods, tracking assessed values, taxable values and City tax bills from 2003 to 2013. The following chart reflects this 10-year time period:

	Sweetwater	Sutton Park	Sugar Mill	Hall Lake
Market Value				
2003	\$452,830	\$272,730	\$254,790	\$183,850
2013	\$612,210	\$389,750	\$328,660	\$244,840
Avg Annual Increase	3.59%	3.77%	2.64%	2.96%
Taxable Value				
2003	\$447,830	\$267,730	\$249,790	\$178,850
2013	\$569,355*	\$362,468*	\$305,654*	\$305,654*
Avg Annual Increase	2.93%	3.24%	2.10%	2.49%
City Tax Bill				
2003	\$1,471	\$879	\$820	\$587
2013	\$1,759	\$1,120	\$944	\$703
Avg Annual Increase	2.30%	2.60%	1.50%	1.90%

*includes 7 percent homestead exemption

During the last 10 years, the increase from residential revaluation has averaged 3.16 percent. All other increases in the City's appraised value were due to new construction. The City uses a 3 percent increase for financial forecasting purposes. The City will work to minimize the bond increase where possible and when annual growth in values exceeds the historical 3 percent increase.